

Youth speak out and get ovation from staff

The Regional Youth Advisory Board was invited to share the voices of children in foster care with regional supervisors, managers and administrators during a panel presentation in Springfield. And share, they did.

Five young adults from throughout central Illinois represented the Youth Advisory Board. Their message was quite simple.

"We want to make things better for kids in foster care," said Corey Wilson, president of the Regional Youth Advisory Board and a panel participant. "Foster care is a life-changing event and we want the kids to know the advisory board is working to make things more comfortable for them," declared Wilson.

Deb Kennedy, DCFS Central Region Administrator, knew the young people could make an unforgettable impression. She believed it was important that DCFS management and administration hear the voices of Central Illinois youth and supported the panel discussion.



Central Region Youth Advisory
Board President, Corey Wilson.

"The staff loved the kids. They reminded us why we are here. Their comments reflected on issues that we should never discount...their presence and the need for their participation in the process," expressed Kennedy.

"Foster care is a life-changing event and we want the kids to know the advisory board is working to make things more comfortable for them."

— Corey Wilson, Youth Advisory Board President

The youth were asked to respond to a series of questions from the moderator, Jay Crome. What the supervisors, managers, and administrators heard were thoughtful, insightful, articulate, serious messages that kids in foster care want adults to hear. The audience responded with a standing ovation as a sign of their recognition and appreciation. Deb Kennedy responded with a commitment to give the Youth Advisory Board workspace and materials within the DCFS Central Region Office in order to conduct their business of getting their voices heard.

"This is great," noted Wilson. "I think I can speak for the panel, we felt heard. I have never received a standing ovation before, it definitely was great."

Recruitment effort takes off to find more families for teens

The Coalition For Community Kids in Care is a committee of the Local Area Network (LAN) 16. The local child welfare agencies work in collaboration to educate the community on foster care and adoptive issues and to recruit and license foster and adoptive families. Agencies involved in the coalition are:

- Catholic Social Service
- Children's Home and Aid Society
- Cunningham Children's Home
- Department of Children and Family Services
- Illini Children's Christian Ministries
- Lutheran Social Services

For more information about the Coalition For Community Kids in Care, you may contact Cindy Conlon at 217/355-4547.

Efforts are underway in the Champaign-Urbana area to recruit foster/adoptive family homes for teenagers. The Coalition for Community Kids in Care is using various teen groups within the community to "display" their message: "PAINT A BRIGHTER FUTURE...FOR A TEEN".

Area youth groups from the First Church of the Nazarene, Cunningham Children's Home Independent Living Program, and the University of Illinois will be working together to distribute 3,000 informational doorknob hangers to individual homes throughout Champaign-Urbana. The groups will also hang brightly colored posters in many area businesses depicting the need for caregivers of teens. Area teens helped develop the ideas for the campaign theme and logo. DCFS created and printed the materials and has made them available throughout the state for other recruitment efforts.

Several events have been planned for this winter to coincide with the campaign. Teen volunteers will be "bagging groceries" at area grocery stores and "busing tables" at a local pizza restaurant while getting out the message that a family can "offer them a brighter tomorrow."

Hard work at job earns \$1000 scholarship

Ruby, 18, recently learned she received the O'Brien Scholarship, a \$1,000 grant to be used for future educational or training opportunities. Ruby earned the award based on her performance in an alternative educational/vocational summer work program coordinated by the DCFS Regional Office of Education. Ruby worked at Scoop Dreams, a food and ice cream shop sponsored by the Youth Impact work program.

"Ruby is one of the best employees we've ever had in the program," said her supervisor Mark Rudicil.

Tim and Sharon Adams, foster parents with The Baby Fold, could not have been more proud or pleased to hear they had a role in her success.

"They (my foster parents) are the best. They didn't give up on me when I had my bad days. They stood by me through thick and thin," Ruby said.

After three happy years with the Adams family, Ruby plans to pursue a career in cosmetology.



Ruby happily accepts congratulations from supervisor Mark Rudicil, for earning a \$1,000 scholarship for her job performance.

Central Connections

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules of local training, features on foster families and community members working for children, photos and news articles and supports all foster families can use.

Foster mom, birth mom and teens bridge gap of foster care

Two teenage girls, their birth mother and their foster mother share their thoughts on the benefits of finding a role for everyone in this Central Region family.

Jaime, age 16

When we came into foster care, we thought life was the worst it could get. But when our foster mother, Cindy, started involving our biological mother in our everyday lives, it made everything much easier.

Our mother, Charleen, is very glad that she gets to be involved in our lives, and that she's involved with the decisions in her children's lives.

She is also very happy that she gets to spend time with us, and that she has the parental rights she thought she lost.

Charleen, Birth Mother

When the girls were first put into foster care, I really wasn't sure how I would get along with the foster mom. As I got to know her, she became a very close friend to have. Jennie and Jaime have two loving mothers.

I have seen them grow up so much. I think they have a really good chance at life, and have seen things from many view points. This foster care program is a good way to help children from a bad situation to turn out to be good people when they grow up. I would like to thank the people who started this program and hope it will help many other children and families in need.

Jennie, age 18

Being victims of neglect and abuse, it helps a lot to know that you have more than one mother to go to. There's our biological mother and then there is our foster mother, Cindy. Cindy and our mother have grown to be really close friends, and that has benefits for all of us. In our case, there was none of the conflict of interest that people expect between foster parents and birth parents. Our mother is glad that there are foster parents out there like Cindy who actually

care about the children. She hopes that there are more people out there to do that.



Cindy, Foster Mother

Charleen didn't have anyone, so I offered to give her rides as small gestures to help her out. As time passed, it only

seemed right to invite her over for holiday dinners and include her in special events. She may not have the capacity to raise the girls, but she most certainly has the ability and desire to love them. It is really in the best interest of the children to be able to maintain a relationship with her. It is also nice that I can model parenting for her. I give her a hand when she needs it, like letting her do her laundry at our house. It gives her a break from having to go to the laundromat and gives her extra time with the kids.

I also know how difficult it is for her to see how they have grown into ladies and how happy they are, and know that she didn't do it. It is painful for her to admit that she cannot do what I can do. I think she is really very strong, to be able to allow me to raise her kids and not feel resentment toward me.

Central Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children*
(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture*
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

Module 4 - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member*
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

Peoria Area 888-507-7433

Module

QUAD CITIES - Blackhawk College

March 4, 11 & 18 (Tues) 6:00-9:00 p.m. 2

PEORIA - Lutheran Social Services

March 12, 19, 26
& April 2 & 9 (Wed) 6:00-9:00 p.m. 10

Champaign Area 888-467-6065

Module

CHAMPAIGN - IL Employment & Training Ctr.

March 3, 10 & 17 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2

MATTOON - Broadway Christian Church

March 4, 11 & 18 (Tues) 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2

Other In-Service Trainings

OUCH! Practical Help for Black Hair & Skin

BLOOMINGTON TBA
March 3 & 10 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

Peoria Area 888-507-7433

GALESBURG

March 25 & April 1 (Tues) 6:00-9:00 p.m.

PEORIA

First English Lutheran Church

March 20 & 27 (Thurs) 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Springfield Area 888-817-1825

LINCOLN

A. Lincoln Memorial Hospital

March 25 & April 1 (Tues) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Champaign Area 888-467-6065

CHAMPAIGN IL Employment & Training Ctr.

March 27 & April 3 (Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

DANVILLE

TBA

March 18 & 25 (Tues)

6:30-9:30 p.m.

DECATUR

TBA

March 22 (Sat)

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

NORMAL

The Baby Fold

March 29 (Sat)

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

PONTIAC

TBA

March 8 (Sat)

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

There's A Hole in My Sidewalk

Autobiography

In Five Short Chapters

I.

I walk down the street
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in
this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit...but,
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V.

I walk down another street.

